

REMARKS

The present response does not amend, add, or cancel any claims. Accordingly, claims 1, 3, 6-12, 14-21, 24, and 25 remain pending in the application. Claims 1, 9, 16, 21, and 24 are independent.

In the Office Action of January 8, 2009, claim 24 was rejected under 35 USC §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,311,813 issued to Stromme et al., ("Stromme") in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,015,703 issued to Keller. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

The Examiner's indication, that claims 1, 3, 6-12, 14-21, and 25 are allowed, is noted with appreciation.

Applicants would like to thank Examiner Kumar for the courtesy and cooperation extended during the interview conducted April 8, 2009. During the interview, Applicants discussed the differences between features of the invention recited in independent claim 24 with respect to the teachings of Keller. Applicants indicated that the guard meshes of Keller did not provide any guidance or support to the sheets being transferred, as in the present invention. The Examiner indicated that Keller discloses the use of the blower in conjunction with the guide meshes to urge the sheet in a different direction, thereby affecting its shape. Applicants further indicated that Keller appeared to teach away from the claimed invention in as much as Keller provides a blower which urges the sheets away from the guard meshes. This differs from the claimed invention where the pneumatic blower is utilized to apply pressure on the sheet so that it becomes pressed against the sheet supporting surface area.

Claim 24 was rejected under 35 USC §103(a) as being unpatentable over Stromme in view of Keller. Regarding this rejection, the Office Action alleges that Stromme discloses an apparatus for handling sheets that includes a sheet transfer member having a transfer surface that is contactable with one of the sheets being transferred, a sheet supporting surface area, and an information reader arranged in an evaluation region to face one of the sheets transferred by the sheet transfer members. In particular, the Office Action alleges that the sheet supporting area is contactable with one of the sheets between the transfer surface and the information reading point. Applicants respectfully disagree.

Independent claim 24 defines an apparatus for handling sheets that comprises:

- a sheet transfer member being movable, and having a transfer surface contactable with one of the sheets so that the one of the sheets is transferred by the sheet transfer member,

- a sheet supporting surface area being contactable with the one of the sheet transferred by the sheet transfer member,

- an information reader arranged to face to the one of the sheet transferred by the sheet transfer member and having in an information reading range including an information reading point, in which reading range an information is securely readable from the one of the sheets, and

- a pneumatic blower for applying a pneumatic pressure to the one of the sheets in such a manner that the one of the sheets is urged by the pneumatic pressure to be pressed against the sheet supporting surface area.

The apparatus of independent claim 24 includes a sheet transfer member that is movable and has a transfer surface capable of coming into contact with one of the sheets so that the sheet being contacted is transferred by the sheet transfer member, as well as sheet supporting surface area that is also contactable with the sheet being transferred by the sheet transfer member. An information reader is

arranged to face the sheet being transferred, and provided with an information reading range in which information is securely readable from the sheets. The information reading range also includes an information reading point. A pneumatic blower is provided for applying pneumatic pressure to the sheet being transferred such that the sheet is urged by the pneumatic pressure to be pressed against the sheets supporting surface area. Thus, according to independent claim 24, it is possible to support the sheet being transferred in a very stable manner against the sheet supporting surface area so that the information reading range remains consistent, thereby improving the accuracy with which the information is being read.

The Office Action had previously indicated that the combination of Stromme and Keller discloses all the features recited in independent claim 24. As previously discussed, however, the combination of Stromme and Keller fails to disclose some of the features that are recited in independent claims 24. Stromme clearly fails to disclose a sheet supporting surface area that contacts the sheet as a result of the pneumatic blower applying pressure thereon. However, the guard meshes disclosed by Keller also differ from the sheet supporting surface area of the claimed invention. As illustrated in the Figure of Keller, the guard meshes 22 are positioned in such a way that they never come into contact with the sheet as it travels through the rollers. The sheet also travels in such a way that it curves in an upward direction towards the top guard mesh. However, the function of the blower is to prevent the sheet from ever coming into contact with the guard mesh.

Thus, Keller appears to teach away from the claimed invention by urging the sheet away from the guard mesh, which corresponds to the claimed sheet supporting surface area. In contrast, independent claim 24 specifies that the pneumatic blower applies a force onto the sheet so that it becomes pressed against

the sheet supporting surface area. Accordingly, the combination of Stromme and Keller fails to disclose or suggest all of the features recited in independent claim 24.

It is therefore respectfully submitted that independent claim 24 is allowable over the art of record.

For the reasons stated above, it is respectfully submitted that all of the pending claims are now in condition for allowance. Therefore, the issuance of a Notice of Allowance is believed in order, and courteously solicited.

If the Examiner believes that there are any matters which can be resolved by way of either a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is invited to contact Applicants' undersigned attorney at the number indicated below.

AUTHORIZATION

Applicants request any shortage or excess in fees in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, and for which no other form of payment is offered, be charged or credited to Deposit Account No. 01-2135 (Case: 500.43486X00).

Respectfully submitted,
ANTONELLI, TERRY, STOUT & KRAUS, LLP.

_____/Leonid D. Thenor/
Leonid D. Thenor
Registration No. 39,397



LDT/vvr
1300 N. Seventeenth Street
Suite 1800
Arlington, Virginia 22209
Tel: 703-312-6600
Fax: 703-312-6666

Dated: April 8, 2009